

orders to return. Instead of that, Constantine assumed the insignia of an Emperor, and wrote to Galerius announcing his elevation. Galerius, it is said, hesitated long as to the course he should adopt. That the news angered him we may be sure. Apart from all personal considerations, this choice of an Emperor by an army on active service was a return to the bad old days of military rule, from which Diocletian had rescued the Empire, and was a clear warning that the new system had not been established on a permanent basis. The only alternative, however, before Galerius was acceptance or war. For the latter he was hardly prepared, and moreover, there was no reply to the argument that Constantius had been senior Augustus, and, therefore, had been fully entitled to have his word in the appointment of a successor.

Galerius gave way. He accepted the laurelled bust which Constantine had sent to him and, instead of throwing it into the fire with the officer who had brought it—which, according to Lactantius, had been his first impulse, — he sent the messenger back with a purple robe to his master as a sign that he frankly admitted his claims to partnership in the Empire.

But while he acknowledged Constantine as Caesar, he refused him the full title of Augustus, which he bestowed upon the Caesar Severus. This has been represented as an act of petty spite. In reality, it was simply the automatic working of the system of Diocletian. The latest winner of imperial dignity naturally took the fourth place. Constantine accepted the check without demur. He had not spent so many